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THE  
SHIBBOLETH  
OF  
QUAKERISM:  
OR

That which they call,  
*The PURE LANGUAGE* Proved;  
As used amongst Us, to be only a  
matter of Indifferency, and not of  
Absolute Necessity.

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Matthew 23. Verse 24.

*The blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camell.*

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By J. C. Minister of the Gospel, and Author of a late Book,  
*Entituled, A Skirmish made upon Quakerism.*

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L O N D O N:

Printed for *Richard Butler*, next door  
to the *Lamb* and *Three Bowls* in  
*Barbican.* 1676.



# Imprimater

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Septemb. 29.  
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G. Jane.



Printed for Richard Butler, next door  
to the Lamb and Tree Inn in  
Babylon 1676.

# Concerning You-ing and Thou-ing.

*It is neither unlawful, inconvenient, nor improper for us in England according to the common use and custom of Speech among us, to say, you, to a single person: but both lawful, convenient, and proper to use this Form of Speech, according to the use among us. In Proof whereof I offer these following Reasons;*

1. **T**Hose that would prove it unlawful must produce some Law of God making it so; for where there is no Law there is no Transgression. But no Law of God can be produced, making it unlawful to use this Form of Speech, *you*, to a single person. Every Law of God for the government of Man-kind is either his Law written and contained in the Scriptures, or written and contained in Nature. As for Scripture, no Text of Scripture can be produced declaring Gods will to be, that we in *England* shall say, *thou*, to a single person, or that all the World shall use this Form of Speech only. Let any such Text be produced by any that are for *thou-ing*.

As for the Law of Nature, written in mens hearts, Heathens as well as Christians in some measure, and as to some things, there is nothing at all in this Law which forbiddeth the common use of *you-ing* among us to a single person. And that is proved by this reason: Nothing is forbidden in Nature, which is not a vice, and simply evil. But neither *you-ing* nor *thou-ing* is any vice, it is neither vice nor virtue, simply, and in it self, nor doth it pertain to morality and sapiential Law and Government, any more than the several forms of speaking which be in *Greek*, *Hebrew*, *Latin*, or any other Language, which are no part of morality, nor do constitute any kind or species of vice or virtue at all: but do rather pertain to art and natural invention, or to institution and custom time out of mind, and the tradition of our Fore-fathers. And though Speech and Language be from God, and proper to Man, and most useful for the order and government of the World, and the communion and society of Mankind, yet no such reason can be rendered of the divers forms and ways of Speech which be proper to all Languages, as is of vice and virtue. And if this were not so, then he that is the best Linguist must be

accounted the best Christian, and he that were best instructed in Grammar, and in the art of true and right speaking would be most Holy: and consequently, ignorant, illiterate people would be cast out of Christs School as no Christians, because no Scholars: and instead of giving our selves to love and fear God and obey his Commands, and be holy in all manner of conversation, we must all give our selves to be learned people, and to be skilful in Language, and make Grammar our Bible; not that I oppose godliness and learning, and deny the same man to be both learned and godly: no, learning and godliness do well consist. But yet learning is not godliness, nor to be compared with it, many, if not most gracious Christians have but small learning: and many learned ones are very graceless, and many times most graceless. The Law of Nature, or if you will the Law of Morality, or rational self-government doth neither approve nor condemn, commend or discommend, *you-ing* or *thou-ing*, simply, and as such, that is, as it is a Phrase or custom of Speech among us, any more then it doth any other Phrase in any other Language.

2. Further I maintain, That it is convenient and proper for us in England to say, *you*, to a single person. 1. Because Custom hath so fixed it, and custom is the great Law in Speech. *Multa renascentur quæ jam ceciderunt, cadentque — quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus, — quem penes arbitrium est & jus & norma loquendi.* Use and Custom is the great arbiter of Speech. The original of Language is from God, and the confusion and variety of Languages also from him, of which we read, Gen. 11. But we are taught to speak by our Parents, and we can give no reason at all of most Names and Words and Phrases, but from Custom, Tradition, and common use: and we must not go to Scripture, Divinity, or Morality, to know which is proper and which improper speaking, but to Dictionaries, and Vocabularies, and conference with Linguists, Grammarians, and Masters in the Art or Science of Speaking, and enquire what is the common Use and Phrase of Speaking. And whatsoever is the common Use, backed by Tradition, and universally taught by Parents to their Children, Masters to their Scholars, and is ordinary in common Converse, this is the most authentick Law in Speech, and whatsoever is thus, cannot be judged by any superiour Law to be absurd and improper, though no reason can be given for it, yea though a Critick or abstruse notionist in Language should condemn it of absurdness, himself would be condemned of idleness and nicety, that can find him nothing else to do than to find fault with such Phrases and Customs of Speech as be established by Tradition and Custom, and uncontrolled Practice

life among all, and all the fault that he can find is, because they do not exactly agree with the Rules of Latin-Grammar, or other Languages, which do not at all judge us as we do not them.

2. The *Quakers* urging of Scripture in this case, and telling us, That throughout the Scripture, we shall not find any where, *you-ing* to a single person, and thence inferring that, *thou*, to a single person is the holy and pure Language, and *you-ing*, carnal and one of those customs and fashions of the World which is in the Flesh and from Satan, and so to be abhorred and condemned, concerning this, I have this to say :

1. That this is an abuse of the Scripture, for it doth not pertain to Scripture to be a Grammar, and to tell us all the Rules in *Propria quænaribus, &c. Quæ genus, &c. As in presenti, &c.* and to be a *Syntaxis* to us, to teach how to speak true *English* or *Latin* or *Greek*, or any other Language. This is to confound the Scripture, and Grammar. Scripture medleth not with those things which pertain to Art and Nature, but with Vice and Virtue, teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, giving us Instructions and Rules for a holy life, in order to eternal blessedness : but it no more pertaineth to Scripture to teach us the art of Speaking, and instruct us either in our own or other Language in the Sense as a School-master teacheth his Scholars, than it doth to teach us how to Plough and Sowe, and to make Boots and Shoes, and learn Trades, and make Engines, and do any manner of artificial work.

2. Though all the World, save *England*, should use to say, *thou*, to a single person, yet is that no Law to us, nor is our Phrase and Custom to be judged hereby. For who shall judge us? The *Hebrew*, the *Greek*, the *Latin*? Why these any more than *French*, *Welsh*, or any other? Or suppose all judge us, I ask, What have they to do to judge us? let them produce their Commission and Authority from God to judge us for using our Country Language, and the several Phrases, Usages, and Proprieties thereof; we have as much to judge them, as they us in this matter, and both alike. It is a great Judgment to the World that there is so great variety of Languages in the World, and that it is become so hard a matter to understand Words and Phrases among our selves, and much more the Speech and Language of other Countries : but there is no one Nation or Language that can claim authority over another and judge them for Forms and Phrases of Speech, much less over all Nations and Languages. And if another Nation or Language should judge us in this matter to speak improperly, they must also judge themselves in many other

other particulars to speak as improperly as we in this.

3. The Apostles and such as had the gift of Languages from God did never (that we read or hear of) condemn this or any other Nation of sin or impropriety in Speech, because of this, or any other form of Speech which was customably allowed. They spake the Language of each people, and not another, *Act. 2. 6, 11.* They did not give new Laws and Rules of Speech, but were made to understand the Language of each place, and to speak that Language which was so in use among them.

4. Every people best knows their own Language.

5. And the use and end of Speech among men is for the expressing of our minds one to another, so as to be understood without equivocation, or confusion, avoiding what is uncouth and absurd in the place we are, and meaning as we speak, and as is commonly understood, placing no holiness in words and phrases, or in the meer signification of them, which in it self is neither laudable nor vituperable: but is as the case or cover wherewith we do cloth the conceptions of our minds, and by them express the thoughts and conceits of our hearts. So that the true use and end of Speech among us is attained by this phrase and way of speaking, *you*; to a single person, as if we should say, *thou*.

3. Let the *Quakers* shew us wherein we offend God, or go against the equity and charity which we owe to one another by thus speaking. If there be nothing in it against the duty of Piety towards God, nor of equity and charity towards our Neighbour, what evil can they find in it worthy of condemnation? wherein is *thou-ing* to a single person pleasing to God above *you-ing*? He hath not told us any where in Scripture any such thing, and our reason or light within reveals no such thing, and we must not make new Laws and Doctrines of our own superstition, and father them upon God, and judge that to be sinful or praise-worthy which God doth not. And wherein do I offend either against Justice or Charity towards my Neighbour, if according to common use I *you* him? He understands me well enough, custom hath so far prevailed that he looks for no other Language from me in ordinary converse, and would account it uncouth to hear any other from me: Do I wrong him in his soul? wherein? Do I wrong him in his good name, body, chastity, or estate? Do I do any thing against love, which the Scripture saith is the fulfilling of the Law? Do I do any thing against that Golden Rule, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and Prophets? *Matt. 7. 12.* Do I do any thing which is unseemly, or of evil report among men, those of mine own Nation and Language, and such as know and understand the custom of our Country?

*Obj.* The Scripture saith, *Be not conformed to this world*, *Rom. 12. 2.*

*Answer.*



*Ans.* What doth this forbid *you-ing* any more than it doth command or approve *thou-ing*? This is no sinful conformity to the world. Let any Quaker prove the thing in it self, *you-ing* to a single person, to be a pollution of the world, and one of those defilements which we are to cast off and separate from. Their saying so is no proof.

*Obj.* But why do we not say *you* to God in prayer, as well as to men; and why do we in our Sermons and printed Books often say *thou* in the singular number to one, and why do Superiours to Inferiours, and Husband and Wife to each other, and friends and equals to each other, often use the term or phrase *thou*, and not *you* to a single person? do we not hereby cross and contradict our selves?

*Ans.* 1. The same custom of speech which teacheth us other things, teacheth us at all times to say *thou*, when we direct our speech to God. It is both proper, and it is the universal law or custom of our speech. 2. The same custom and common traditional usage teacheth and would have us to say *you* generally to a single person. 3. The same custom and reason leaveth it free to Preachers to vary as they see cause, doing all to edification: so in Writings, chiefly. 4. Custom also alloweth it more to Superiours, and more to some sorts of Superiours, and more to some sorts of Inferiours, than to other some; as in Parents to their Children while young, and that which argueth love and freeness and intimacy in some, as between dear and bosom-friends, may come from pride, and stomach, and scorn, and anger in others; and that which in it self is neither good nor evil, may be abused, and by accident become evil, and savour of evil: and that which in one is seemly, is not so in another; and that which one does out of common custome only, another doth out of custome and conscience both; and that which in it self hath some shew or appearance of good, may be but a cloak of sin; and that may be good and suitable at some times and in some cases, which may not be so at other times, and in other cases. Finally, the thing in it self is of small moment, separate from all circumstances and adherent respects: but so far as it falls under the genius of morality, and is in an act of reason and choice, and so is a part of Gods Law, and humane self-government. So it is considerable, and is never purely indifferent, but as it is clothed with its respects and accidents, is either pleasing or displeasing to God; and so every tender conscience, will not, dare not but make conscience of it. And no doubt but as in other things pertaining to duty and the right government of the tongue there is much sin committed, so in this matter of *you-ing* and *thou-ing* many are often faulty. And I am so far from thinking it sinful to say *you* to a single person, that contrariwise I think many do frequently sin in using the term *thou*, and do not doubt but much hurt may grow by the using of the indiscreet terms, as also through pride, contempt, passion and business, and that a little of this fire of the tongue may kindle a great matter of strife, and that Satans and mans corrupt and Proud heart can fetch matter of sin and contention out of *you* and *thou*; and every man should be most careful to observe every point and tittle of Gods Law, even to the uttermost of his Power, and for that end is to shun all appearance of evil, and give no offence to any, and is to study the things which make for peace, and is to think nothing in Gods Law simply, and in it self little or nothing, and to be harmless and without all blame; so it will concern him to use this phrase of *you* and *thou* with conscience and sincerity, without either making no account of it at all, or laying so much stress upon it, as the Quakers do. I think this enough for the confutation of their error, the vindication of the truth, and the instruction and satisfaction of faithful souls. But I may not end without some admonition to the Quakers, having first shewed

shewed them their sin, and matter for their repentance and humiliation, which they stand bound to as concerning this matter.

1. They are guilty of adding to the word of God, and of making new sins and duties where God hath made none, a thing which God hath sorely threatned, *Rev. 22*.

2. Also they are guilty of putting light for darkness, and darkness for light; and calling good evil; and evil good, against which there is a wo threatned, calling the phrase of *you-ing* to a single person an apostate language, and the other holy and pure.

3. They put it into their Catechisims, and make it a mark and cognizance of the Religion, and a note of distinction from others; and lay out abundance of zeal upon small diminutive shred of Religion comparatively, in imitation of their fore-fathers the Pharisees, and Monks and Votaries, and most superstitious hypocrites, whose phrase it is to tythe Mint and Annise and Cummin, and pass by the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith: So do Quakers manifest great zeal about *you-ing* and *thou-ing*, and omit and pass over far weightier points, *Blind Guides, which see at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel*, Matt. 23.

4. Their censuring of their Brethren is much worse for this, and conceiting themselves to be much more accepted of God for this, and so growing into pride, weaving them a web of holiness of their own invention, and matching and equalling it with Gods, and not content to use the phrase of *Thou-ing* themselves, they censure for as do not imitate them, and wound the sides of love and charity by their censuring and speaking of their Brethren causelessly.

5. Their fathering all this upon the Spirit of God, and pretending to his inspiration, and entitling him to these, as to their other errors, giving such names and titles to their Books as equal them with Scripture, and vouching the Holy Spirit for the Mouth and Teacher in all, this among the rest being one, as *Moderate Enquirer*, p. 2. *Some Principles of the Elect People of God*, by J. Pennington and others, p. 39, 84. *Smith's Primer*, called the *Demonstration of the new and living Way*, in which if the Spirit be not expressly vouched, he is in many of their Writings, and their Principles in which they all agree doth assert it, namely that the light within is the Supreme Guide, and Rule to all, and to be minded in all things, being infallible, and all Writings coming from it.

6. And by all this Satan is no little served, who by these lesser errors doth make way for greater, and stirreth up strife and Religious fleshly zeal, and begetteth wrangling and dispute, and entangleth the simple in his snares, who are easily caught these sooner than in greater, many of the ignorant sort being able to talk of *you* and *thou*, and make a great stir about these, whose understandings will not serve them busie themselves much about higher and deeper points.

7. And lastly, by all, the heart is corrupted and carnalized, and deceived into vanity and groundless singularity; and men think that Preciseness and Religion, and Spirituality consisteth in *thou-ing*, and that because many of those which say *you* to a single person are bad livers, that therefore the thing it self is evil, and taking it to be evil the contrary must needs be good, and if good they must needs be zealous for, and the more zealous, they conceit they are more holy, and so deceive themselves with the new or image of holiness of their own making, affecting such as be of their own self, and separating from others. The Lord open the eyes of these poor-deluded souls, shew them compassion, while yet there is hope, and bless all means and endeavours of his faithful Servants thereunto, and let all that fear God say Amen.